

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 00847 201641Z

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7408

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PFOR, EEC

SUBJECT: SECOND CABINET MINISTER ENTERS EC CAMPAIGN

REF: LONDON 16851

1. IN A MAJOR SPEECH TO A LABOR PARTY MEETING IN BRIGHTON JANUARY 19, PETER SHORE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE, AND A VETERAN ANTI-MARKETEER, LAUNCHED A SCATHING ATTACK ON BRITISH MEMBERSHIP OF THE EC. HE THUS BECAME THE SECOND CABINET MINISTER, AFTER TONY BENN, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY, TO ENTER THE RUN-UP TO THE EX-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 00847 201641Z

PECTED EC REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN (REFTEL).

2. ALTHOUGH THE FIERCE OPPOSITION OF BENN AND SHORE TO BRITISH MEMBERSHIP HAVE LONG BEEN WELL KNOWN, THEIR RECENT ACTIONS HAVE PROVOKED DEMANDS FROM PRO-MARKETEERS FOR THEIR RESIGNATION FROM THE CABINET. THEIR CRITICS ARGUE THAT THE TWO MEN ARE VIOLATING THE COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY INCUMBENT UPON GOVERNMENT MINISTERS, BY TAKING THEIR CASE TO THE PUBLIC BEFORE THE CABINET HAS DECIDED WHETHER TO HOLD A REFERENDUM, WHAT THE GROUND RULES WILL BE, OR WHAT STAND THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS, THUS FAR AT LEAST, NOT CALLED THEM TO ORDER.

3. IN HIS SPEECH AT BRIGHTON, SHORE CHARGED THAT EC MEMBERSHIP HAD WEAKENED BRITAIN. WHERE BENN HAD CONCENTRATED ON THE ALLEGED LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY INVOLVED IN EC MEMBERSHIP, SHORE DWELT ON ALLEGED ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES. (THE FULL TEXT OF SHORE'S SPEECH IS BEING POUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT AND USEC.)

4. COMMENT: THE ANTI-MARKETEERS' EAGERNESS TO JUMP THE GUN ON THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN MAY REFLECT THEIR GROWING ANXIETY THAT THE TIDE IS NO LONGER RUNNING THEIR WAY. THEY MAY ALSO HOPE TO COMPLICATE THE FINAL STAGES OF "RE-NEGOTIATION." IN ANY CASE, IT'S STILL EARLY DAYS IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE A HARD-FOUGHT POLITICAL BATTLE, ENLIVENED WITH PLENTY OF TWISTS, TURNS, AND SURPRISES.

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